

Sūrah Naṣr

It is explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Kāfirūn, the previous *sūrah* that the *sūrah* is a declaration of migration and acquittal and in fact a proclamation of war. Now, in Sūrah Naṣr glad tidings are given to the Prophet (sws) that the time is near when divine help shall specially come to his rescue, Makkah shall be conquered and he shall successfully complete the mission on which he had been deputed by the Almighty. He shall be pleased and satisfied with him. The opening verses of Sūrah Faṭḥ also portray this subject. I have dealt with it at length there. Those interested may take a look.

I have already referred to the deep relationship which exists between migration, *jihād*, victory and divine help in the exegesis of Sūrah Kāfirūn. Here it would be sufficient if one keeps in mind the fact that when the time of migration comes in the life of the Messengers the truth has been communicated to their people to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it. It is at this time when they separate from their people and form an organized group with their followers and it is at this time when their people become devoid of the pious element in them and are no more than a body without the soul. Moreover, at this time, the believers become an unconquerable force by being able to freely adhere to their ideology that whoever attacks them is vanquished and whoever is attacked by them is decimated. Thus whenever Messengers have declared war on their enemies, it is after migration from their people and although during this war they have been put through trials for their own training, the help of God blesses them with a victory no one can dare challenge. The various incidents in the life of Moses (sws) and Muḥammad (sws) bear ample testimony to this.

It is because of this relationship between migration and victory through divine help that this *sūrah*, unanimously regarded as Madīnan, was deemed appropriate to pair a Makkan Sūrah. There are two opinions about the time of revelation of this *sūrah*. One is that it was the very last of *sūrahs* revealed after the conquest of Makkah and the second is that it was revealed before this conquest giving glad tidings of it. I would prefer the second of these.

The reason for this is evident from the Qur'ān and from various sayings attributed to the Prophet (sws) that since he was to follow the

religion of Abraham (sws) and since the real centre of this religion was the Baytullāh, hence liberating it from people who violated its trust and endowing it with the characteristics of the religion of Abraham (sws) was the final and real mission of the Prophet (sws). This has been spelled out in the verses: الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا (3:5) (This day I have completed your religion for you and fulfilled My favour on you and have chosen Islam to be your religion. (5:3)). Whatever else was achieved besides this were actually its by-products and corollaries.

The second reason was that the Quraysh were the real force in Arabia who were at the helm of affairs of Makkah and since they were the custodians of the Baytullāh, they commanded the awe and respect of all Arabia. To break the shackles of their power was real victory. Without breaking these shackles, no victory could be counted as real victory nor, once these were broken, was there any possibility left for anyone to combat the onslaught of the Muslims.

The third reason is that the help and victory mentioned in this *sūrah* and the way they came are no ordinary help and victory; they are the help and victory cherished by the hearts of Muslim and which they eagerly desired after migration for they were a consequence of the promise of the Almighty and His Prophet (sws) and in accordance with the established practice of God. This help is the help mentioned in Sūrah Mujādalah in the following words: كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبَنَّ أَنَا وَرُسُلِي (58:21) (The Almighty has ordained: "I and My Messengers shall always prevail," (58:20-21)) and this very victory and help is mentioned in Sūrah Şaff thus: وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ (61:13) (And another success also which you hold dear: the help of God and imminent victory, (61:13)). It is obvious that the victory and help mentioned in this *sūrah* is the conquest of Makkah and there is no possibility of it referring to some other victory. People who are of the opinion that the *sūrah* was revealed after the conquest of Makkah have misunderstood a narrative. However, it is not possible to discuss this in detail here and, perhaps, a careful reading of what I have written here does not even require such a discussion.

Glad tidings of decisive help pervade the mood of the *sūrah* – glad tidings of the liberation of Makkah and glad tidings of people entering the folds of Islam in multitudes and finally glad tidings of the success and of the Prophet (sws) in his mission. From this last glad tidings, it becomes self-evident that the time of the Prophet's death is also near. For this reason, he should spend even more time in celebrating the praises of God and in expressing His exaltedness so that he is able to

express his gratitude on the great favour of completion of religion bestowed upon him by the Almighty and so that he is blessed with even more favours by his forgiving Lord. It was from this part of the *sūrah* that the greatest scholar of the Qur'ān, 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās (rta) derived that the Prophet's death was at hand. No doubt this was a subtle inference and the greatest testimony to this subtlety was that 'Umar (rta) too praised and corroborated it. However, this particular aspect also stores great news for the Prophet (sws) and I shall explain it during the course of the exegesis of this *sūrah*.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ (١) وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا (٢) فَسَبِّحْ
 بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا (٣)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful

When the help of God and the victory comes and you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes, extol the glory of your Lord while expressing gratitude to Him and seek His forgiveness. Indeed, He is ever disposed to mercy. (1-3)

Text and Translation

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ (١)¹

The emphatic and specific way in which the help of God and victory are mentioned here and the way the Prophet (sws) has been asked to exalt and thank the Almighty shows that no ordinary help or victory is mentioned here: in fact, the reference is to the divine help and victory, which, in accordance with the established practice of the Almighty is always ordained for the Messengers of God against their enemies. This help and victory arrives when a Messenger has exhausted all ways of communication in delivering his message to his people and these people on the other hand become adamant in denying him and in showing animosity to him that there is no hope left for any change in their attitude.

In Sūrah Yūsuf, this principle for the arrival of divine help is stated thus: when Messengers of God are left with no hope that their people will embrace faith and the people themselves prove from their very attitude that they regard the warnings of the Messenger delivered to them to be absolutely false and baseless, divine help then appears:

1. When the help of God and the victory comes

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْأَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا (١١٠:١٢)

Until when the Messengers have no hope from their people to embrace faith and the people think that they are falsely being warned of punishment, then comes Our help to the Messengers. (12:110)

At another place, this principle is stated thus:

فَصَبَرُوا عَلَىٰ مَا كُذِّبُوا وَأُوذُوا حَتَّىٰ أَنَا هُمْ نَصْرُنَا (٣٤:٦)

But they [the Messengers] persevered on being rejected and on being afflicted until Our help came to them. (6:34)

Similarly, the article *alif lām* on the word الْفَتْحُ (the victory) shows that it refers to the promised victory which comes to the Messengers of God and his companions in accordance with His established practice and which has been promised by Him and which is awaited by them even in the toughest periods of their lives. We have already referred to the verses of Sūrah Şaff in which this very victory is mentioned thus: وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا (And another success also which you hold dear: the help of God and imminent victory, (61:13)). At other places of the Qur’ān also, this success and victory have been mentioned in a very terse manner the way it is here; however, since people already knew about it, they found no difficulty in understanding it in spite of the brevity of style. Thus, for example, it is said: لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ أَنْفَقَ مِن قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَاتِلَ (١٠:٥٧) (The status of those of you who spend and fight in the way of God before the victory and those who do so afterwards would not be equal, (57:10)). Here, one can see, there is no explanation as to which victory is being referred to; however, everyone can understand that the words can only refer to the conquest of Makkah because it could only have been this conquest which could act as a barometer in measuring the extent and value of the deeds of those who were struggling in the way of God. Before the conquest of Makkah, Muslims had achieved victory on numerous occasions and after it also the victories reaped were no less; however, none of them had such a status that minds would immediately grasp that the words “the victory” to only mean the conquest of Makkah. Also, no other victory cast such a profound impact on the collective lives of the Muslims that the value of a virtuous act be measured in relation to the act being done before this victory or after it. After this victory, the whole of Arabia surrendered before Islam in such a profound manner that there remained no possibility for it to rise up again against it. It was

as if with this victory, the real objective of Muḥammad's advent was fulfilled. Consequently, the words of the sermon which the Prophet (sws) delivered after this conquest at the door of the Baytullāh were:

لا إله إلا الله وحده صدق وعده ونصر عبده وهزم الأحزاب وحده

There is no god except the one God. He fulfilled His promise and helped His servant and alone defeated all enemy groups.²

It was after this sermon that the Prophet (sws) turned his attention to the leaders and pundits of the Quraysh who had fought with him with all their might but after this victory were brought as prisoners of war before the Prophet (sws) to await judgement about their fate. The Prophet (sws) asked them: "Do you know what I am going to do with you?" All of them replied in one voice: "You are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother." After hearing this reply, the Prophet (sws) said: "Go now, you are free."³

It is evident from the way divine help and victory are mentioned together in this verse that no one can achieve victory without God's help. Thus it is not befitting for a person to show vanity on his victory and conceitedly think that it was the result of his own strategy and skill. He should regard it to be the result of God's strategy and wisdom. Consequently, this is also evident from the words of the Prophet's sermon for he attributed the defeat and humiliation of all his enemies solely to the power of God. He neither tried to take credit of it himself nor gave credit to anyone else for it. This is also evident from the directive given to him in this *sūrah* to exalt the Almighty and express gratitude before Him because He alone is worthy of being thanked for this great favour and He alone should be exalted and extolled for it.

وَرَأَيْتِ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا (٢)⁴

This is the most prominent feature of the victory referred to above. The Prophet's conflict with his tribe was not because of any worldly reason; it was only for the religion of God. He wanted the leaders of the Quraysh to fulfil their obligations towards the House of God because they were its custodians. If they were not ready for this, then they had no right to keep it in their custody nor did they have any right to stop people through

2. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4 (n.p.: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 185, (no. 4547).

3. Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, vol. 9 (Makkah: Dār al-Bāz, 1414 AH), 1188, (no. 18055).

4. And you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes

persecution and coercion from embracing the religion of God. It was to eliminate this religious coercion (called *fitnah* by the Qur'ān) that the Prophet (sws) dislodged the Quraysh from Makkah. Moreover, the only hindrance to people in embracing faith was the wave of intimidation and coercion let loose by the leaders and the commoners had no ill-will against the faith they were being called to. Hence, as soon as the shackles of this duress and oppression were broken, people hastened to accept Islam in multitudes. Before the conquest of Makkah, people who would come to the Prophet (sws) to profess faith would come in fright and fear. Up to that time, even uttering a word of sympathy for Islam was dangerous for people let alone embracing it. We have already mentioned earlier that during that time when certain delegations of the Anṣār came to pledge allegiance to the Prophet (sws), the leaders of Quraysh struck fear in them by saying that this pledge was tantamount to declaring war on both the Arabs and the non-Arabs. Obviously, in the presence of such intimidation and fright, only those people could have had the guts to accept Islam who had the resolve to fight mountains; however, once this atmosphere of coercion was brought to an end, no hindrance remained in accepting faith. Such was the avid manner in which people started to come to Makkah as if they needed to quench their thirst from a spring which provides the water of immortality.

It was this conquest which changed the entire complexion of Arabia to the extent that people were suddenly afforded with the liberty to choose their own religion and the wave of coercion and terror let loose by the Quraysh on the basis of which they had become virtual masters of the faith and destiny of people was brought to an end. Veiled in these glad tidings was the news to the Prophet (sws) that soon the time would come when the people of the Quraysh would rush towards Islam with total freedom from the shackles of the Quraysh. This is a very strong evidence that the victory referred to here is the conquest of Makkah. There is no other victory which produced such results. People who regard this victory to be something other than the conquest of Makkah have not been able to decipher the real message of the *sūrah* neither have they been able to correctly judge the profound effects of the conquest of Makkah.

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا (٣)⁵

Many facets are encompassed in this verse; however, two of them are of special importance.

5. Extol His glory while expressing gratitude to Him and seek His forgiveness. Indeed, He is ever disposed to mercy.

Firstly, it guides the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) to the obligation which was imposed on them after this divine help and the conquest of Makkah: instead of showing pride and conceit on this achievement, people should exalt and extol the Almighty, seek forgiveness from Him for their sins with the hope that the Almighty is very Gracious and Noble. He showers His mercy on those among His servants who turn to him in repentance for their sins. It is mentioned in Sūrah Kawthar: (۱۰۸: ۳-۱) *إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ* (Upon you We have bestowed Kawthar so pray only for God and offer animal sacrifice only for Him, (108:1-2)). In a similar manner, here this verse states the responsibility which is an essential requisite of the victory granted. The verse also guides people to the way which can make this conquest a lasting one. Whatever blessings people are granted by the Almighty necessitate certain responsibilities. As long as people continue to carry out these responsibilities, they remain the recipients of these favours and blessings. When they forget them, the Almighty after giving them some respite either confiscates these favours or puts them through severe trials because of these favours.

Secondly, this verse carries glad tidings for the Prophet (sws): after this victory, he shall have successfully fulfilled the great obligation the Almighty had imposed him. The way the Prophet (sws) drained his strength and set about discharging the responsibility of prophethood imposed on him has been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs*. To have an idea of this tremendous effort put in by him, one only needs to read the following words of Sūrah Tāhah in which the Almighty lovingly rebuked him thus: (۲۰:۲) *مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى* (We have not revealed this Qur'ān that you strain yourself, (20:2)). In this situation, the greatest glad tidings for him could have been nothing but the fact that he be told that a day would come when he shall be relieved of the burden of this responsibility after successfully carrying it out. Consequently, the *sūrah* did give the Prophet (sws) this pleasing news and also evident from the purport of the *sūrah* is that he would successfully accomplish his task. This is because besides asking him to seek forgiveness from the Almighty, he has also been given the glad tidings of God being *تَوَّابٌ* (*tawwāb*). When this word is used in relation to God, it means that He is very gracious to servants and forgoes their blemishes.

We have already explained many times in this exegesis the nature of blemishes on which the Prophet (sws) has been asked to seek repentance: prophets of God never sin as a result of being led by base desires; their blemishes arise because of some noble motive which makes them exceed limits in an otherwise a virtuous act. One example of such an excess can

be seen in the above quoted verse of Sūrah Tāhā. Here the Prophet (sws) has not been stopped on something which relates to base desires; he has been stopped from over trying and straining himself from reforming the rebellious who were not worthy of such pampering.

These glad tidings have been mentioned in Sūrah Fath in even more blatant words and we have already explained them from all aspects. For details, readers can consult the explanation of the following verses:

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا لِيُغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ
عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا (٤٨: ٢-١)

We have blessed you with an open victory so that God may forgive you your past and future blemishes and complete His favour upon and He may guide you to a straight path. (48:1-2)

The construction فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ has been explained in earlier *sūrahs*: when the words *tasbīh* and *ḥamd* occur together then the dominant meaning of the former word is to absolve the Almighty of all things which are against His majesty and by mention of the latter word the intention is to assert all attributes in Him which He in fact possesses. Monotheism is actually the result of the right combination of *tasbīh* and *ḥamd*.

With the blessing of the Almighty, we come to the end of this *sūrah*'s *tafsīr*. فالحمد لله حمدا كثيرا (So profound gratitude be to God)

Lahore,

4th July 1980

20th Sha'bān, 1400 AH